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ABSTRACT

The question of whether the online job market reflects the trends predicted for the job market was examined in a study of a random sample of 690 Internet job postings over a 6-month period. Each listing was categorized by type of position, desired qualifications, salary, and job specifications. Of the human resources (HR) jobs posted, 7.2% were for generalists. The remaining postings were for jobs related to the following areas: recruitment/staffing; HR management; compensation and benefits; employee assistance program consulting; HR administration; and other specific aspects HR. Nearly half (47.3%) of the postings preferred applicants with 4 years of higher education; 33% did not specify an education requirement. Most (92.4%) employers did not require certification. Work experience requirements and salaries varied widely. The study findings contradicted many expectations formed after a literature review. Far fewer generalist positions were found than expected. Another unexpected finding was that salary did not appear to increase as the responsibility and strategic role of the specific HR function increased. The number of listings requiring advanced degrees was far lower than expected, and the predicted trend for more required certifications was not substantiated. Postings for certain types of entry-level jobs predominated among the online job listings. Several areas requiring further study were identified. (MN)

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate HR job listings in relation to hiring trends identified in a review of the literature. Does the on-line job market reflect the trends predicted for the job market? This study examined a random selection of 690 Internet job postings over a six-month period. Each listing was categorized by type of position, desired qualifications, salary, and job specifications.

HR Positions on the Internet

By Dr. Carey Coghill and Dr. James Kirk
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Review of Literature

At the turn of the new millennium, business objectives are constantly changing. Shifting workforce demographics, amplified globalization, and rapid technological change, have initiated a revolution in the human resources function (Laabs, 2000). Traditionally, Human Resources Management was primarily an administrative support function (Caudron, 1999). Not anymore. Human Resources initiatives now seek to align with overall business objectives, creating a strategic business partner. As a result, Human Resources practitioners must balance several different roles: strategic business partner, internal advisor, administrative and operational specialist, and both employee and employer champion, within a global, post-industrial economy (Laabs, 2000).

Given these trends, what are the implications for the Human Resources job market? Organizations now seek professionals that understand business fundamentals and recognize HR's role as a strategic partner. HR professionals now must possess the traditional functional competencies (i.e. staffing, compensation) with changing leadership skills (i.e. communication, negotiation), and business skills (ability to function as a business partner). (Barber, AE)

With today's HR practitioners emerging as strategic business partners, organizations are increasingly seeking HR generalists. Generalists are knowledgeable in all facets of human resources and understand the big-picture HR issues. This might present implications for specialists with technical knowledge and skill in specific facets of human resource management such as: recruitment and selection, training and development, compensation and benefits, employee/labor relations, and health and safety. Frequently, human resources professionals with broader responsibilities obtain higher salaries and reach higher-level positions. Opportunities for specialists are likely to be found only in larger organizations (Solomon, 1994).

The competition to recruit HR professionals who serve as strategic business partners may be a key factor in rising pay levels. Salaries for human resource professionals are rising faster than overall US salaries, according to a survey conducted by William M. Mercer Inc. and the Society for Human Resource Management. HR professionals are playing a vital role in the success of organizations, and their value is being recognized and rewarded (Flynn, 1995).

Academic competencies are becoming growing necessities to move to the top of the HR ladder. Traditionally, HR professionals sought degrees in organizational psychology. Today, many are seeking MBA's, CPA's, professional certifications, and professional association memberships, in order to obtain a clear comprehension of overall business fundamentals, including financial and analytical skills (Russo, 1999).

As the HR function reengineers, HR careers are forming new profiles. HR professionals striving to position themselves for future assignments, need to grasp business essentials and develop a broad understanding of HR. Organizations will search for professionals with the ability to move across boundaries within the HR function, between corporate functions. The effect of this shift will have major implications for HR career paths in the immediate future. (McNerny,1996).

Method

The researchers gathered data from 690 job advertisements using a random sampling of listings from four internet-based job search engines. The data was collected over a six-month period (3 months before, and 3 months after January 1, 2000). Only websites with a Human Resources category were selected for use. The following websites were used:

(1) Excite Employment Classifieds http://classifieds2000.com/cgi-cls/display.exe?partner=c2k&path=Employment~SearchEmployment. Under "Search by Profess", "Human Resources" was selected http://classifieds2000.com/cgi-cls/KeywordSearch.exe? KC1890+c2k+ KeywordSearchResultsN.

(2) HotJobs http://www.hotjobs.com/ Human Resources was selected under Career Channels http://www.hotjobs.com/

(3) Jobs 4 HR at http://www.jobs4hr.com/seekers/search/index.cfm; A blanket search was performed (no specific search options were selected)

(4) Society for Human Resource Management's Job Listings at http://www.shrm.org/jobs/; A blanket search was performed (no specific search options were selected).

The data was categorized in accordance with the following questions:

- What types of positions are available in the human resources job market? (Compensation & Benefits, Career Development, Consulting/Employee assistance, Employee relations, HR Administrator, HR Generalist, HR Information Systems, Hr Manager, HR Specialists, Organizational Development, Other, Placement, Recruitment & Staffing, and Training & Development)

- What qualifications (education, experience, and certification) are specified in the job listings?

- Can the applicant apply on-line for the position?

These categorizes were based on the following key words: (1)Type of position (2) Years of related work experience required, (3) Years of education requirement (none, high school, community college, undergraduate degree, and graduate degree), (4) Type of degree (no degree requirement, Associates Bachelor of Science, Bachelor of Arts, Masters of Arts, and Masters of Science), (5) Type of Certification required, (6) Salary and (7) Opportunity to apply for the position on-line.

Results

In relation to the type of positions available, 26.1% of the job advertisements listed were for Recruitment/Staffing positions, 20.9% other, 14.3% HR Manager, 13.0% Compensation and Benefits, 7.2 % HR Generalist, 4.5 % EAP Consulting, and 3.3 % HR Administration

Figure 1. Frequency and percentage counts in relation to the type of positions advertised.

Position Title	Frequency	Percent
Comp & Benefits	90	13.0
Organization Development	7	1.0
Other	145	20.9
Placement	2	.3
Recruitment/ Staffing	181	26.1
Career Development	3	.4
EAP Consulting	31	4.5
Employee Relations	17	2.4
HR Administration	23	3.3
HR Generalist	50	7.2
HR Information Systems	11	1.6
HR Manager	99	14.3
HR Specialist	12	1.7

With regard to years of higher education 2.3% of employers desired 1 year, 13.3% desired 2 years, 1.3 % desired 3 years, 47.3% desired 4 years, and 2.2 % desired 5 years. 33% did not specify an education requirement in the job listing.

Figure 2. Frequency and percentage counts in relation to years of education desired in job advertisements.

Years of Education	Frequency	Percent
.00	229	33.0
1.00	16	2.3
2.00	92	13.3
3.00	9	1.3
4.00	328	47.3
5.00	15	2.2

Regarding degree requirements, .6% of the job listings did not require a degree, .1 % High School Diploma, 1.0% Associates degree, 47.1% Bachelors degree (Bachelor of Science and Bachelor of Arts combined), 1.7% Masters (Masters of Science and Masters of Arts degrees combined), Masters of Business Administration (MBA) 1.2%, and 48.1 % with other.

Figure 3. Frequencies and percentage counts in relation to type of degree desired in job advertisements.

Degree	Frequency	Percent
No degree required	4	.6
Associates	7	1.0
Bachelors of Arts	248	35.7
Bachelors of Science	79	11.4
BSN	2	.3
High School Diploma	1	.1
Masters of Arts	4	.6
Masters Bus Admin	8	1.2
Masters of Science	6	.9
Other	334	48.1

In relation to professional certification requirements, 92.4% of employers did not require certification, 2.6% listed Professional Human Resources certification, 1.9% desired certified C Planner, and .6% required Specialist Human Resources certification

Figure 4. Frequencies and percentage counts in relation to professional certifications desired in job advertisements.

Professional Certification	Frequency	Percent
Accredited CA	1	.1
Accounting	1	.1
Certificate APR	1	.1
Certified C Planner	13	1.9
Certificate EAP	1	.1
Certificate CEBS	5	.7
Certified Public Accountant	1	.1
Certificate MAIR	1	.1
No Certificate	641	92.4
Certificate PEO	1	.1
Professional Human Resources	18	2.6
SHRM	1	.1
Specialist Human Resources	4	.6
Certificate SSBI	1	.1

With regard to years of work experience desired, 15.2 % of the job listings preferred 5 years, 13.5% preferred 2 years, 11.2% preferred 3 years, 10.1% preferred 4 years, 3.6 % preferred six years, 3.5% preferred seven years, 3.3 % 1 preferred only one year, and 1.7% preferred 10 years

Figure 5. Frequency and percentage counts in relation to the years of work experience desired in job advertisements.

Years of Work Experience	Frequency	Percent
.00	223	32.1
1.00	23	3.3
2.00	93	13.4
3.00	77	11.1
4.00	70	10.1
4.50	1	.1
5.00	105	15.1
6.00	25	3.6
7.00	24	3.5
8.00	21	3.0
9.00	10	1.4
10.00	12	1.7
12.00	2	.3
13.00	1	.1
15.00	3	.4

In relation to the salaries, 2.2%of the job advertisements were listed between $10,000 and $30,000, 7.5% were listed between $30,001 and $50,000, 6.73% were listed between $50,001 and $70,000, 3.6% were listed between $70,001 and $90,000, 0.9% were listed between $90,001 and $120,000, 1.9% were listed between $120,001 and $200,000, and 0.4% were listed above $200,000. The lowest salary listed ($10,000) was at only 0.6%, as the highest salary listed ($488,000) was also at 0.6%.

Can the applicant apply on-line? 52.2% were able to apply on-line, 47.8% were not.

Figure 5. Frequencies and percentage counts in relation to ability to apply online for job advertisements.

Apply online?	Frequency	Percent
No	330	47.6
Yes	360	51.9

Areas for Further Study

This study was limited to an examination of Internet based job postings. Future studies might examine several different sources of job leads. For example, newspapers, Internet, and HR related magazines could be used and compared.

A longitudinal study would also be of interest. Repeating this study in the future would provide data for trend analysis in the areas of types of positions listed, salaries, and required qualifications.

Discussion

Based on the review of the literature, we expected to find a greater number of HR generalist as opposed to specialist positions. This trend is in keeping with the need for HR employees capable of dealing with strategic business issues.

We combined a number of job positions for the total number of HR specialists positions (Compensation and Benefits, Recruitment/Staffing, Career Development, Placement, EAP (Employee Assistance Programs) Consulting, Employee Relations, HR Information Systems, and HR Specialist). For the total number of generalist positions we combined (Organizational Development, HR Administration, HR Generalist, and HR Manager).

The data did not support our expectation. 50 % of the jobs listed were for specialist positions. 25.8% were generalist positions. However, the large number of Recruitment/Staffing positions, which could be sales positions, may skew the results.

Another expectation was to see and increase in salary parallel to the increasing responsibilities and strategic role of the HR function. Unfortunately only 170 listed a

salary amount therefore it is not possible to generalize the findings. However the most frequent salary was $65,000 and the high was $488,000 which reflects an increase over typical HR Specialist salaries than in the past.

A third expectation that greater education would show a greater number of listings for Masters degrees, especially Masters of Business Administration Degrees. This was not found in the data. 47.1% of listings sought a Bachelors degree, with only 1.7% desiring Masters degrees, which included both Masters of Science and Masters of Arts. An even lower percentage, 1.2% required a Masters of Business Administration.

The predicted trend for more required certifications was not substantiated. 92.4% did not even list a certification requirement. The SHMR PHR and SPHR certifications were required in only 0.1 % of the listings. Other specialized certifications, which included Accounting, Compensation, Employee Assistance Programs, etc., totaled 6.7%.

Implications

The implications of this study are varied. For people wanting to enter the HR field for the first time, it raises the implication of internal versus external hiring policies. It would be helpful to conduct follow-up interviews with these companies to ascertain how many hire from within for entry-level and advanced HR positions.

Implications are also raised about what types of jobs are listed on the web and why. It appears that certain types of entry-level jobs are predominant. Learning more about the job duties in these positions might reveal that they are primarily focused on recruiting or selling consulting programs on a commission basis.

The implications for educators, academic institutions, and certification organizations require further study. Follow-up interviews with employers would reveal more about the screening criteria for hiring. Certifications and advanced degrees were required on an infrequent basis. However, it would be beneficial to know if these credentials give a candidate an added advantage during the selection process.

As use of the World Wide Web for listing HR positions increases, it is important for job-seekers, career changers, educators, and professional associations to be knowledgeable about the types of jobs listed and the trends in selection criteria.